

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE LITERATURE SYMPOSIUM OF  
TERM III 2011 AT LIRA TOWN COLLEGE

**‘O’ LEVEL**

**NGUGI WA THIONGO: The River Between**

1. The plot of the novel is subtly built on contrasts and premeditated juxtapositions. Show how the two are important in understanding the novel.

[Lira Town College]

2. “The River Between uses issues, events and subjects to stand for something deeper”. Comment.

[Aduku S.S]

3. **D.WOOLGER AND K. OGUNGBESAN: Rhymes and Rhythms**

**AFRICAN BEGGAR**

Sprawled in the dust outside the Syrian store,  
A target for small children, dogs and flies,  
A heap of verminous rags and matted hair,  
He watches us with cunning, reptile eyes,  
His noseless, small poxed face creased in a sneer.

Sometimes he shows his yellow stumps of teeth  
And whines for alms, perceiving that we bear  
The curse of pity; a grotesque mask of death,  
With hands like claws about his begging bowl.

But often he is lying all alone  
Within the shadow of crumbling wall,  
Lost in the trackless jungle of his pain,  
Clutching the pitiless red earth in vain  
And whimpering like a stricken animal

Raymond Tong

***Questions:***

- (a) What is the poem about?
- (b) What do you think is the poet’s attitude towards the beggar?
- (c) What does the phrase “trackless jungle of his pain” tell us about the beggar and our relationship to his suffering?
- (d) How appropriate are the following words used to describe the beggar;
  - (i) Reptile eyes
  - (ii) Grotesque mask of death
  - (iii) Clutching
  - (iv) Whimpering

[Comboni College]

**CAMARA LAYE: The African Child**

4. Discuss the theme of African Tradition and customs as portrayed in The African Child.  
[Ikwera Girls' S.S]
5. How admirable is the character of Laye in the novel, The African Child.  
[St. Katherine Girls' S.S]

**JOHN RUGANDA: The Burdens**

6. What are the forces that led to Wamala's downfall?
7. Tinka's last words in the play are "And always remember it was not my fault". Explain what she means and show whether indeed it was not her fault.  
[St. Joseph's Seminary Aboke]

**WOLE SOYINKA: The Lion and the Jewel**

8. Consider the plans Lakunle and Baroka have for modernizing Illunjinle. Whose plans would you find acceptable?  
[Aduku S.S]
9. Referring closely to the text, show how Lakunle is not ready for marriage.  
[Lira Town College]

**OKOT P'BITEK: Song of Lawino**

10. Lawino thinks she is a better wife than Clementine who is a strange and undesirable woman. What details does she give for this opinion?  
[St. Katherine Girls' S.S]
11. "Song of Lawino is about family crisis". Do you agree with this statement? Support your side with evidence from the text. [Ikwera Girls' S.S]

**‘A’ LEVEL**

**AUSTIN BUKENYA: The Bride**

1. Examine Bukkenya’s portrayal of culture and customs in The Bride.  
[St. Katherine Girls’ S.S]
2. How does the playwright present the idea of organic change in the play?  
[Lira Integrated School]

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: Twelfth Night**

3. Show how Shakespeare uses setting to develop the conflicts in the play.  
[St. Mary’s Magdalene]
4. How effectively does Shakespeare use soliloquy in Twelfth Night?  
[Skyland High School]

**NGUGI WA THIONGO: Devil on the Cross**

5. How plausible is it that Devil on the Cross is a novel going beyond the boundary of Kenya of its time.  
[Comboni College]
6. Briefly describe the devils feast and how does it help in enhancing the rot in Kenyan society that Ngugi portrays in the novel. [Aduku S.S]

**CHARLES DICKENS: Oliver Twist**

7. Examine the social aspects in society that Dickens attack and those that he upholds in Oliver Twist.  
[St. Katherine Girls’ S.S]
8. How does Dickens present the nature and life of criminals in the novel?  
[Lira Integrated School]

## PROSE

### 9. *Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.*

A poor relative is the most irrelevant thing in nature. He is a piece of rude interference, a haunting conscience, a pre-posture, a shadow, lengthening at the peak of our prosperity, an unwelcome memory, a perpetually recurring embarrassment, a drain on your purse, a more intolerable smudge on your pride, a drawback upon success, an insult to your rising, a stain on your blood, a blot on your status, a rent in your garment, a death's head at your banquet, a Mordecai in your gate, a Lazarus at your door, a lion in your path, a frog in your chamber, a fly in your ointment, a mote in your eye, a triumph to your enemy, an apology to your friends, the one thing not needful.

He is known by his knock. Your heart tells "that is Mr." A rap between familiarity and respect; that demands, and at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He enters smiling and embarrassed. He holds out his hand to you to shake and withdraws it back again. He casually looks in about lunchtime, when the table is laid. He offers to go away saying you have company, but is easily persuaded to stay. He fills a chair and your visitor's two children have to be accommodated at the side table. He never comes on days when your wife says, with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr will drop in today".

He remembers birthdays and then swears it was by chance he stumbled upon one. He declares he will not have chicken as it is little, yet he is willing to be forced to take a piece against his resolution. He insists on water but will be persuaded to empty the remaining glass of juice when the guest presses him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are afraid of being either too polite or too civil enough to him for your liking. The guests think they have seen him before. Everyone speculates about his condition; and for the most part take him to be a poor relative. He calls you by your Christian name, to imply that his other name is the same as yours. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had more self-confidence. With half the familiarity, he would pass for a casual dependant, with more boldness; he would be in no danger of being taken for what he really is. He is too humble for a friend, yet claims more right than a client. He is a worse guest than a tenant because he brings no rent yet it is likely that from his clothes and behavior, your guest take him for one. He is asked what he thinks of the topic of conversation and declines because of not knowing much, but resents being left out of the discussion. When the guests stand up to leave, he offers to call the driver but lets the servant go.

He remembers your grandfather and will thrust in some mean and quite unimportant detail about your family. He knew it when it was quite so flourishing as he is blessed in seeing it now. He revives some past situation to make what he calls "favourable comparisons". With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will ask the price of your furniture, and insult you with a misplaced comment on your window curtains. He is of the opinion that the house is elegant, but after all, there was something more comfortable about the little hut you grew up in, which you surely must remember. He dares to say that you must find it very convenient having your own car and appeals to your wife if it is not so. His memory is unreasonable; his complements perverse; his talk a trouble; his stay determined; and when he goes away, you dismiss his chair into the corner, as quickly as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is, a female poor relative. You may do something with the other. You may pass him off tolerably well; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. In the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself out of choice.

**Questions:**

- (a) What is the writer's attitude towards poor relatives?
- (b) Comment on the tone of the passage
- (c) How effective is the writer's use of the following in conveying his feelings about poor relatives?
  - (i) Sentence structure
  - (ii) Punctuation
  - (iii) Repetition
  - (iv) Imagery
- (d) In your opinion, how important is the last paragraph of the passage?  
**[Aduku S.S]**

**R.B SHERIDAN: The School for Scandal**

- 10. Discuss with illustrations, Sir Oliver Surface's judgement of his two nephews, Joseph and Charles in "The School for Scandal". **[St. Joseph's Seminary]**
- 11. Discuss two scenes which you consider to be humorous in Sheridan's play The School for Scandal. What techniques has he used to bring out the humour in these scenes?  
**[Skyland High School]**

**ALBERT CAMUS: The Outsider**

- 12. Discuss the significance of the Marengo and beach scenes in the novel The Outsider.  
**[St. Joseph's Seminary]**
- 13. Are you happy with the ending of the novel, The Outsider? Give your reasons.  
**[Amuca S.D.A]**

**WILLIAM GOLDING: Lord of the Flies**

- 14. What is the significance of the forest, the dancing and the pig's head in the context of the novel 'Lord of the Flies'.  
**[St Mary's Magdalene]**
- 15. Discuss the use of the setting in chapter one of the novel, Lord of the Flies.  
**[Lira Town College]**

*Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow:*

### **AN ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING**

I took the embankment path  
(As always, deferring  
The bridge). The river nosed past,  
Pliable, oil-skinned, wearing

A transfer of gables and sky.  
Hunched over the railing,  
Well away from the road now, I  
Considered the dirty-keeled swans.

Something slobbered curtly, close,  
Smudging the silence: a rat  
Slimed out of the water and  
My throat sickened so quickly that

I turned down the path in cold sweat  
But God, another was nimbling  
Up the far bank, tracing its wet  
Arcs on the stones, incredibly then

I established a dreaded  
Bridgehead. I turned to stare  
With deliberate, thrilled care  
At my hitherto snubbed rodent.

He clockworked aimlessly a while,  
Stopped, back bunched and glistening,  
Ears plastered down on his knobbed skull,  
Insidiously listening.

The tapered tail that followed him,  
The raindrop eye, the old snot:  
One by one I took all in.  
He trained on me. I stared him out

Forgetting how I used to panic  
When his grey brothers scraped and fed  
Behind the hen – coop in our yard,  
On ceiling boards above my bed.

This terror, cold, wet – furred, small-clawed,  
Retreated up a pipe for sewage.  
I stared a minute after him.  
Then I walked on and crossed the bridge.  
(Seamus Heaney)

***Questions:***

- (a) Describe the surrounding in which the poet finds himself at the beginning of the poem (lines 1 – 8). Which words help to suggest the unattractiveness of the scene?
- (b) Trace the various feelings and attitudes of the poet towards rats as described in the poem.
- (c) Explain and comment on the effect of the following descriptive phrases used in the poem.
  - (i) 'a rat slimed out of the water (lines 10 – 11)
  - (ii) 'He clockworked aimlessly' (line 21)
  - (iii) 'The raindrop eye' (line 26)
- (d) What do you think is important about the last line of the poem?
- (e) Why do you think the poem is called An Advancement of Learning?

**[Lira Town College]**